

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 4, 1997

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**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN JOEL HEFLEY  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FACILITIES**

**NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 1998  
DIVISION B—MILITARY CONSTRUCTION AUTHORIZATIONS**

*June 4, 1997*

This afternoon, the Subcommittee on Military Installations and Facilities meets to consider the authorizations for the military construction and military family housing programs of the Department of Defense and related items. The legislation we will consider today will be incorporated into division B of the H.R. 1119, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1998.

The chairman's mark consists of two parts. The central component of the mark contains the military construction authorizations for FY1998. Also included is legislation to reauthorize the Sikes Act, the basic statutory framework within which the military departments and the Department of Defense manage natural resources on military installations. We have worked closely with our colleagues on the Committee on Resources on this legislation. This is a bipartisan piece of legislation that is without controversy.

At the appropriate time, I will open the mark to amendment at any point. First, however, I want to make a few observations.

This subcommittee continues to be concerned about the serious shortfalls in basic infrastructure, military housing, and other facilities that effect the readiness of the armed forces and the quality of life for military personnel and their families. The budget requested by the Administration for FY1998 continued a pattern of significant deterioration in the funding programmed by the Department of Defense for military construction. In constant dollars, the Administration requested

25 percent less in funding for military construction for the coming fiscal year than it sought just two years ago. The preliminary FY1999 budget would continue the erosion. Over a four-year period, the Administration's program would cut one-third of the funding for military construction from the level Congress authorized for FY1996.

The Congress has worked diligently over the past few years to fill the gaping holes in the Administration's program. There is still a very serious military family housing crisis and well-documented shortfalls in other quality-of-life facilities. Barracks modernization is still far from accomplished and the quality and availability of child development centers is not where it should be, even by the Department's own standards. Moreover, the Administration does not appear to have a solid plan for dealing with critical facilities shortfalls in basic infrastructure such as piers, airfield improvements, and basic maintenance. The concern in Congress is bipartisan.

The recommendations contained in the chairman's mark will help alleviate some of the backlog and critical shortfalls. The mark contains an additional \$750 million in added funding for military construction and military family housing. Although this recommendation will buy back slightly less than half of the Administration's \$1.6 billion cut to the MILCON topline, the mark will buy back nearly all of the Administration's \$478 million cut to the current level of effort to improve military housing and other quality-of-life facilities.

The quality-of-life package I am offering with Mr. Ortiz comes to roughly \$450 million. Sixty percent of the increase in funding "above-the-line" would be dedicated to the quality-of-life package. The chairman's mark would fund, above the Administration's request, over \$272 million in improvements to existing family housing units and in new construction (benefiting 2,458 military families); nearly \$117 million in new barracks and dormitory construction at 11 locations; over \$21 million for four child development centers; and \$39 million in other quality-of-life improvements.

In addition, the mark would provide additional funding for military construction to support the training, readiness, and maintenance requirements of the active and reserve components.

Before I yield, I want draw attention to a legislative provision that is important to me personally and to every member of the subcommittee. As many who had the honor to serve in this House with him know, the late Frank Tejeda was an able representative of the State of Texas, a friend of the soldier and a genuine American hero. As a member of this subcommittee, he made a tremendous contribution. Currently, the Air Force is working with the private sector to develop two parcels of badly needed housing at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. Section 2883 of the chairman's mark would name those housing developments in honor of Frank Tejeda. I think this modest gesture, which acknowledges Frank's love of military families and his service on their behalf, is appropriate and I know each member of the House will feel that way.

In closing, I want to express again my appreciation to the members of the subcommittee, especially the distinguished ranking Democratic member, Solomon Ortiz, for their contributions to this bill. This is truly a bipartisan effort and I urge all members to join in support of this legislation.